

Big Boys Do Fly

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Category: Lois and Clark

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-05-06 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-05-06 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 17:13:24

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 11,564

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: On the set of the TV series 'Lois and Clark,' the actor playing Clark Kent begins to wonder what's make-believe and what's reality...

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Some brief explanation might be required here, since some of what follows may be a little difficult to follow otherwise. The events in this story occur in a world something like ours, in which Superman is merely a character in books and on TV. The Superman this world knows of, from the books, was in fact born in 1940, and the TV show, in 1999, has reached the start of Season 2. Finally, to those who find it very difficult to envisage anyone other than Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher playing Clark and Lois, please bear with me! All will be revealed!

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Big Boys Do Fly

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- Marner Sisters Studios, 1999 -

Conor Kane sighed heavily as he climbed out of his 5-series BMW. If there was one thing he disliked about this job, it was the early starts. No, scrub that, he thought, *nothing* is worse than that dreadful suit he had to wear for large parts of the time. It took almost an hour to put on, was extremely heavy to move around in, and was severely restricting. It was pretty... revealing... as well, and *that* had taken some getting used to.

But on the other hand, he reminded himself, it was regular work - they were well into the second season of the series now, and the

studio showed all signs of keeping their promise to extend the show to at least a third season. Of course, his contract was for five seasons in all, but he knew very well not to trust any TV network to keep its promises when it came to renewal each year.

And there were other compensations; his sensitive mouth curved into a smile as he considered his very beautiful co-star. Laura Lindsay had turned out to be a pleasure to work with; nothing like he had been led to expect from some of the tabloid reports which had suggested that she could be a bitch on-set if she didn't get her way. No, Laura was a consummate professional, always knew her lines and her marks, always turned up on time, understood her character inside out and was polite to everyone on the set. All right, she could sometimes be impatient if things weren't going well, particularly if it was a director who just couldn't make up his mind how he wanted a scene to be played, or a guest star screaming that their part just wasn't *them*. But on such occasions Conor shared her frustrations, and they had got into the habit of letting off steam with each other.

He and Laura had developed an enjoyable rapport with each other over the year and a half - with three months' interregnum - they had been working together; their relationship had progressed from wary watchfulness to friendship within the first six months, and once the first season's episodes were in the can and the cast and crew had departed for other work, Conor had discovered that he genuinely missed his co-star. She had seemed to miss him as well, and he had been surprised and delighted when she had called him from the set of the TV movie she had been filming. They had had a number of lengthy telephone conversations over that summer break, while she had been in New England and he had been filming guest slots in an action drama show down in Florida.

It had been great to see her again once production had recommenced in September, and they had quickly begun to spend even more time together, relaxing over hot-dogs or cream cheese bagels during breaks, discussing scripts and storylines in one or other's trailer, and even spending the occasional evening at his place or hers watching videos and eating takeout. She had great taste in clothes, and he had enjoyed a couple of shopping trips with her in recent weeks. Laura also had a real 'feel' for the show, he thought, and there were several occasions recently when they had discussed the direction in which the writers were taking the characters, and she had encouraged him to write his own script for the show. "We can try to satisfy the fans by at least suggesting our characters could get it together," she had said, laughing, as they'd discussed possible storylines.

Laura was actually a lot like Lois Lane, her character, Conor thought - not for the first time - as he reached his trailer. Lois was intelligent, loyal, tenacious, didn't suffer fools gladly, dedicated to her job... and her partner, Clark, was madly in love with her. Just like... he was with Laura.

He stopped abruptly in the act of shutting his trailer door. What did he mean - he was in love with Laura? He shook his head, rejecting the idea. Sure, she was attractive - he had once or twice found himself becoming a little bit turned on by some of the things they'd had to do on-screen. There had been a very few kisses, although one of those, sprawled on a hotel bed, had been quite steamy; and there had been a couple of scenes where their characters were required to

curl together on a sofa - he'd had to admit that it felt pretty good to be close to Laura like that. Off-set, they occasionally hugged or kissed each other on the cheek, no more, and neither of them had ever shown any desire for more - in any case, up until a few months ago Laura had been dating someone else. No, their relationship was more like that of brother and sister, he told himself. It's not a good idea to transfer your character's motivation to yourself, Conor, he insisted as he inspected his face in the mirror (thankfully there were no bags under his eyes, despite staying up late with a couple of beers to watch the ball-game last night). You are not Clark Kent, and Laura is not Lois Lane.

Just then a distinctive tap could be heard on his trailer door; he grinned, and called out, "It's open, Laura."

The dark head of his co-star peered around the door. "Just checking you're decent, Conor," she laughed as, having established that fact, she then entered.

"I just got here," he rejoined, pulling a face at her mock-disapproving raised eyebrows.

"Wardrobe won't like that - you're in the Suit for most of today, and you know how long it takes you to get into it."

Conor dropped his leather jacket onto the couch and peeled off his T-shirt in one swift movement; glancing across at Laura, he was surprised to see that she seemed to be inspecting his bare chest. It wasn't the first time she'd seen him topless; in fact, on a number of occasions he'd been around her while only wearing shorts. One or two of those times had been for the purposes of filming, or they'd been going over lines or script direction while he'd been in makeup prior to getting dressed. But she'd spent time with him at the pool over at his house, and he'd been wearing much less then. So why was she looking at him like that now - and why did his mouth feel suddenly dry?

He hesitated, then strolled casually over to her. "See anything you like?" he asked, outwardly teasing but inwardly wondering whether this would mark a turning-point in their relationship. He was surprised and strangely breathless when she reached out and drew her fingertips roughly down his chest.

"Yeah - maybe," she murmured huskily.

They gazed into each other's eyes. Conor held his breath.

She reached up at the same time as he bent his head; just as his mouth was about to touch hers, his head jerked up. "Damn!"

"What?" She stared at him, confused.

"Someone's outside."

As he spoke, a loud rat-tat sounded on the trailer door. "Mr Kane, you're wanted in Wardrobe!"

Laura's jaw dropped. "I didn't hear anything - how did you know that was going to happen?"

Conor hesitated; he didn't know how to explain the strange sensations he sometimes experienced, such as being aware that someone was approaching before he had seen or heard them, an occasionally enhanced sense of smell, the knowledge that he could overhear conversations other people couldn't seem to hear. It was just something which had been a part of him for a very long time, but he had realised as he'd been growing up that other people didn't share these experiences, and so he had learnt to hide them, to pretend that he hadn't heard things or been aware that someone was in the vicinity. This time he had slipped up.

"Uh... he must have shouted twice. I definitely heard something before that knock." Changing the subject in order to avoid further questions, he grabbed his towel. "I guess I'd better get over there." He paused, his hand on the door-knob. "Laura - will I see you later?" *Later* later: off-set, he meant.

She ducked her head, allowing her shoulder-length brunette hair to conceal her expression; Conor recognised the gesture as indicating that she was embarrassed or awkward about something, and was trying to conceal her reaction. He frowned; he didn't want what had almost happened to destroy their friendship. "Laura...?" he prompted.

She glanced up at him, her expression under control, and flashed him a smile. "Sure - I still have that bureau I want moved to the other room. You're the strongest guy I know, Superman aside, so the job's yours!"

Relieved, Conor responded with an easy grin. "No problem." She was right about that; although he didn't work out at all regularly, for some reason he seemed to be physically much stronger than a lot of other guys he knew. Not that it was anything he tended to boast about; he knew that although his body was in good shape, he didn't look like a Rambo. And he had no wish to be cast as a muscle-man; he preferred strong dramatic roles where he got to show that his character had a personality.

Exiting the trailer, he called to Laura, "See you on set!"

Two hours later, Conor was gritting his teeth and trying to remain calm. He had been wearing this hot and confining outfit for an hour now, and filming hadn't even started. First, there had been some problems with the flying apparatus, and no sooner had that been sorted out than this week's guest villain had decided to throw a wobbly over the proposed camera angles. Clenching his fists, Conor tried to resist the desire to announce that he'd had enough and march straight back to his trailer.

"What an idiot," a soft voice murmured from just behind him. He turned to see Laura, in her Lois skirt-suit, smiling sympathetically at him. She knew how he felt about wearing the Superman suit, and understood that these sort of delays really wound him up. It wasn't even as if he could simply take off the heavy cape until it was needed; because it was so long and heavy, the harness for it went underneath the top half of the outfit. He had no choice but to keep the whole lot on.

Smiling back at Laura, he moved closer and threw his arm lightly around her shoulder; she responded with an arm about his waist. "Sorry - I might be a bit whiffy," he murmured, remembering that the sultry weather had caused him to sweat quite a bit while he'd been forced to stand around.

She leaned her head briefly against his shoulder. "That's okay - I like the smell of healthy male," she teased.

Conor laughed. "In that case, you should come over next time I'm digging the garden!" Unlike most of his neighbours in the Santa Monica suburb where he lived, Conor didn't employ a gardener; for some reason, he enjoyed doing his own digging, planting and cultivating. He occasionally thought that if he hadn't been a success at acting he might have considered going into farming - although he also enjoyed writing, and was actually considering quitting acting to try writing full-time.

He glanced down at Laura again, to see her brown eyes smiling up at him. That had been a very unexpected few moments in his trailer - it was a real pity they hadn't had a chance to see where it would lead, he thought. They would certainly have kissed - but how would it have felt? Of course, he had kissed Laura before, for the cameras, but screen kisses were rarely genuine. There was quite a bit of technique involved in making them look right, and of course the fact that there were cameramen, soundstage technicians, make-up artists and the director milling around took away any feeling of intimacy.

Later that evening, he thought. Maybe we'll get a chance to take up where we left off...

"Conor! Places!" The director's voice echoed across the cavernous soundstage, and Conor quickly dropped his arm from Laura. "Action stations - at last!" he grunted, and strode over to his mark. He was required to speak threateningly to the villain, and they would then film a take-off. For that, Conor stood on a hydraulic lift; he bent his knees a little and then straightened, in order to give the impression of self-propelled upward thrust. The lift then raised him a couple of feet off the ground as he reached upwards with one arm stretching towards the roof of the soundstage, making it look as if Superman was directing his flight skywards. He only had to go through the take-off routine five times before the director pronounced himself satisfied.

A break then; Laura had been rehearsing a scene of her own with some of the show's other regular actors, and as Conor drained his soda she joined him. They were about to film a scene together, one involving a stunt, and he was aware that she was nervous about it. They were by now used to the 'flying' scenes, in which Conor was supported by a series of harnesses; sometimes Laura also had a harness if he was supposed to be carrying her, but there had been a couple of occasions when she had been unsupported because it would have been impossible to hide the harness. On those occasions, they were both grateful for his superior strength; it enabled Laura to feel confident that he wouldn't drop her.

This scene involved Laura, as Lois, falling off - or rather, being pushed off - the roof of a tall building, and Superman diving to rescue her. They had filmed similar scenes before; usually the 'roof' from which Laura had to appear to fall was only a few feet off ground

level, and the 'falling through mid-air' effect often simply involved Laura lying on a white floor in front of a blue screen, waving her arms and legs about; digital imaging in the editing process completed the effect of free-fall.

This time, for some reason best known to himself, the director had decided that Laura was to be on top of one of the buildings in the studio complex; she would be supported by a light harness but would actually fall from the rooftop. The apparatus had been rigged up so that Conor, as Superman, would appear to 'fly' across and catch her in his arms.

He reached across to squeeze Laura's arm reassuringly. "You'll be fine. You know they've tested this stuff over and over." She nodded, still a little pale. "And hey, have I ever dropped you?" he teased.

An hour later, Conor hung suspended from the crane, a position which he absolutely hated, waiting for his cue. They had 'walked' through their positions a number of times, and the technicians had demonstrated with dummies exactly where the two actors should end up. He heard the countdown, then the call for 'Action!'.

Laura was pushed; he heard her scream very realistically, and the technician started to lower him downwards. He mimed the movements so that it would look, on screen, as if Superman was actually flying, and concentrated on making the grab for Laura look realistic. If he missed this time it wouldn't be a disaster, since they were both in harnesses and attached by cables, and there was a soft landing below in any case, but Conor was a perfectionist; besides, he hated being in the harness and had no wish to repeat the scene.

He caught Laura and held her tightly against him, then turned his face upwards as if Superman was about to fly back to the roof; this was the signal that the technician controlling the pulley should raise them again. He heard an unexpected sound - an odd creaking noise - and the wires suddenly jerked and went slack.

Several things happened at once. Laura screamed and clung more tightly to him; the technicians on the crane began yelling conflicting instructions; and the director called "Cut! Get them down from there!" But Conor barely heard any of this; something inside him was telling him to *concentrate*, concentrate on not falling. In the split second after the wires had slackened, Conor began to drift upwards, carrying Laura with him. He was barely able to believe that it was happening: he was somehow defying gravity!

Then the cables tightened again and the two actors were slowly pulled upwards; a technician in a climbing harness was lowered from the crane and guided Laura back to the roof. Conor, once he'd been pulled high enough, climbed onto the platform from which he'd originally been lowered.

Everyone seemed to be talking at once, shouting, blaming each other for the near-disaster; Conor stood silently, shaking inside, as another technician removed his harness, wondering how on earth he could explain what had seemed to happen when he and Laura had started to fall. But he realised that no-one seemed to have noticed; the crew had all been too busy trying to stop disaster striking.

Laura, he thought. Is she okay? He looked over to the rooftop where she was now sitting, leaning against a column. She looked pale but otherwise okay, and she was carrying on an agitated conversation with the director, who had hurried up to check that his star was all right. After a moment or two, the director glanced over to Conor's platform.

"Hey, Conor, you might as well get out of the suit. We won't be filming any more Super stuff today - I want to make sure that rig's working perfectly before you two get up there again."

"I am *not* getting up there again!" Laura protested furiously, her voice shaking.

"Look, come on honey, it'll be fine," the director insisted. "Hey, take the rest of the day off - both of you. Go sailing or watch a ball game or something. And we'll see you tomorrow."

Conor didn't wait for Laura; he climbed down from his perch and made straight for Wardrobe. Half an hour later, dressed again in his jeans and wearing one of his character's shirts, he made his way back to his trailer. *Nothing* had happened, he was assuring himself. He had imagined it all. It was just the shock of the cables going slack and the feeling, for an instant, that they were going into freefall. Obviously the technical guys had used some sort of emergency fallback system. *He* hadn't done anything - of course he hadn't!

His trailer was unlocked, and Laura was pacing up and down inside.

She still looked agitated, her brown eyes wide, dark pools in an oddly pale face, and without hesitation Conor went straight to her and enfolded her in his arms.

"I thought we were going to be killed there," she jerked out shakily.

"It was fine," he soothed. "They got the wires sorted out pretty quickly, and the landing would have been reasonably soft anyway. And," he continued, deliberately making his voice lighter, "you would have landed on top of me if we *had* fallen."

She clung to him for a few moments longer, then pulled back and said tersely, "Take me home, Conor."

"Sure," he agreed. "Your car not here?"

"It is," she explained, "but I just don't feel like driving right now."

They climbed into Conor's BMW, and he set off down the freeway towards her house, which was also near the coast but a little higher up than his near Santa Monica beach. The journey passed in near-silence; glancing at Laura once or twice during the journey, Conor could tell that she was thinking about something.

She invited him in and led him straight to her comfortable, open-plan sitting-room; to Conor's surprise Laura went to her drinks cupboard and produced a bottle of bourbon. At his surprised raise of one eyebrow, she flushed slightly and retorted, "I don't know about you,

but I need a drink after what happened back there!"

He decided to join her and tried to think of something to say which would ease the strange atmosphere which seemed to have crept up between them, but before he could Laura took a large gulp of her bourbon and faced him, eyes flashing with some unidentifiable emotion. Her voice, however, was oddly cool

"So. Conor. Care to tell me *exactly* what went on up there?"

He tensed, all the nerves in his body jangling in warning. Breathing heavily, he answered, "You know. The pulley must have given way. And they'd already loosened the wires to your harness so - "

"I don't mean that," she interrupted fiercely. "I mean, what the hell did *you* do?"

He stared at her. What did she mean... could she have guessed?

She continued. "One second we were in free-fall, the next we were... floating. I can't think of any other way to describe it. We went *up.* And we weren't being pulled up. And I know I didn't do anything, so that just leaves you, Conor Kane!"

Conor swallowed. She *had* noticed. And it was time to stop pretending to himself that these things weren't happening. He'd done that for too many years now. He took a sip from his glass and sighed heavily. "Laura, I don't have a clue what happened, except that *something* was telling me to concentrate on not falling. Then we were - flying. Or something. And I have no idea why, or what caused it."

"Superman flies," Laura said inconsequentially. Conor stared at her, puzzled. "Superman is strong, too. And Superman has super-hearing."

Conor took a step backwards, as if trying to ward off the meaning of her words. "Laura, what on earth are you talking about?"

"You, Conor!" she yelled. "*You* can do all these things! Have you never wondered about it? Never thought it was strange that you can do things other people can't?"

"But I'm not so different from anyone else," he protested, still trying to deny it, to her at any rate. "Sure, I'm strong - but so are lots of guys. It's just my metabolism. And okay, I seem to have some sort of sixth sense sometimes, but that's all it is. I don't know what the heck you're suggesting here!"

Laura walked over to him, and without warning punched him in the stomach. Conor was shocked that she had done it, but other than that felt no pain. Laura, on the other hand, stepped back and nursed her fist, wincing in pain.

"What was that all about?" Conor demanded, baffled.

Laura shook her head. "Come over here." He followed her to the side of the room. She indicated the large bookcase against the wall, and said bluntly, "Lift that."

He stared at her. Had his co-star lost her mind?

She repeated her command; as if in a trance Conor moved to the bookcase; without quite realising how he was doing it, he assessed its position and likely weight distribution, then bent and slipped his fingers under one corner. Straightening his back, he lifted; his jaw dropped as the entire bookcase raised several inches off the ground. It barely felt heavy!

Shocked, he dropped it back to the floor, barely noticing the clatter as several books fell over. He spun around and whirled back towards Laura. "What the hell is happening to me?"

She shook her head. "You probably know the answer to that better than me, Conor."

He crossed to the sofa and collapsed onto it, dropping his head into his hands. "Laura, I haven't the remotest idea what's going on. All this stuff - it has to be a fluke. Or something." What was happening to him?

"It sure is something," she murmured under her breath. Conor's head jerked up and he stared at her.

"You heard me?" she gasped, wide-eyed.

He nodded. "Shouldn't I have?" She shook her head.

They were silent for several minutes, each trying to figure out what was going on. Hundreds of pictures flashed through Conor's mind, images from his childhood when he'd realised he could overhear things, occasions when he'd been convinced he could see through walls, one time when he'd made it home from school, running, in less time than his father took to drive. Yes, he'd always known he was different.

What was he?

Laura reached out to touch his arm. "Conor?" she said softly, a question in her eyes.

He stared back at her, his own eyes confused. "Laura, I haven't a clue what's happening to me."

She stared straight back at him, unblinkingly. "Happening? Conor, be honest - haven't you always been able to do these things?" He didn't answer, his expression giving away his surprise at her guess. How could she have known about what he had been hiding for so long - even hiding from himself? "Conor, you're my best friend. We've become pretty close over the last year or so, and I've noticed you're not as careful with me as you are with most other people. You let your guard drop around me. So I've known for a while you're stronger than you really have any right to be. And I've been pretty sure you can... see things you shouldn't. I have no clue why you can do any of this, but I just know you can."

"Why did you never say anything?" he whispered to her.

She shrugged. "You never mentioned it. I figured if you wanted me to know you'd say."

He reached for her hand, holding it tightly between his two.

"What else can you do, Conor?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said hesitantly. "Yeah, I can see a long way away, and I used to think I could see through things too. And I can move pretty darn fast if I need to, though I haven't done that for a while."

"And you can fly," she added wonderingly.

"Fly?" He sounded doubtful.

"What do you think happened this morning, Conor?" Her tone was sardonic.

He was silent; he genuinely didn't know. He thought back to those few moments after the wires had appeared to give way, and remembered the strange feeling he'd experienced inside. 'Concentrate', he told himself now; 'concentrate!' 'Fly!'

He released his grip on Laura's hand and stood up. Gritting his teeth, he raised his chin and willed his body upwards. Nothing seemed to happen...

"Conor!" Laura's voice shrieked.

He fell to the floor in a heap.

"You were - hovering - three feet in the air!" she told him breathlessly. He simply stared at her. Then, almost without conscious thought, his limbs untangled themselves and his body lifted; levitated; then drifted around the room. He could fly! *Really* fly, not some tricks with a few harnesses and digital imaging equipment.

Barely stopping to think what he was doing, Conor flew himself over to where Laura was standing, slack-jawed, watching him, and on impulse bent down to scoop her up in his arms before flying with her around the room, out the door and up the stairs.

"Conor! Conor, what are you doing?" she protested, clinging to him desperately.

He bent to smile at her. Suddenly, this at least was easy; he knew what he wanted, and he was pretty sure she did too. "Laura - Laura, honey - you know I'd never let you fall."

Focusing his gaze on the doors along the landing, he identified Laura's bedroom and flew them inside, landing them on the bed. He saw her looking at him, confusion in her eyes, as he settled them comfortably on the mattress.

He reached out a hand towards her face, stroking a fingertip down her cheek. She quivered under his touch.

He then bent his head and allowed his lips to hover over hers. Her eyes met his, and there was invitation in her gaze.

He kissed her.

Several minutes of soft murmurs, kisses and caresses later, Laura pulled back from Conor's seeking lips. "We really should talk about what's happening," she protested softly.

Conor drew back, unsure; he'd been convinced she was as eager for his kisses as he'd been for hers. Had he presumed too much? "Laura... I wasn't planning on trying to take this any further right now anyway. But I thought you wanted - earlier, I mean?"

She reached out to him, running her fingers through his sleek black hair. "I did - I do. I guess... I find you pretty attractive. But that's not what I meant. We should talk about *you*."

He nodded, seeing the sincerity and concern in her expression. "Yeah, you're right. But I'm still pretty blown away by it, you know?"

"We can't ignore it, Conor!" she insisted.

Sighing, he got to his feet and held out his hands towards her. "Let's take the normal way downstairs," he suggested wryly, leading the way to the door.

Back downstairs, Laura headed for the kitchen. "Coffee this time," she insisted. "I think we might need a clear head if we're going to figure all this out."

Conor leaned against the island worksurface in her bright, airy kitchen and surveyed Laura's very attractive figure as she filled the coffee-machine. She glanced around, catching him at it, and wagged her finger at him. "Come on, Kane, let's keep our minds on the important topic!" He pulled a face at her. She was right, of course: she knew him better than almost anyone, and he was glad she was his best friend.

He stuck his hands deep in his jeans pockets and focused a thoughtful stare at Laura. After a few moments, he observed, "I'm glad you know. It's been hell never being able to talk about this with anyone."

"Not even your family?" Laura asked incredulously.

Conor shook his head, a cynical expression hovering about his mouth. "No chance. I was an only child, and my parents kind of closed their eyes to anything that was... not quite normal. And if I did anything weird while I was growing up, I usually got sent to bed early, or had privileges withdrawn - that kind of thing. I learned pretty quickly to pretend I was just like everyone else. And after a while, I guess I believed it too." He paused, thinking back over those childhood years when he had *known* that strange things were happening to him. "I just learned to write off the weird things I could still do as some sort of fluke, just good guesswork or accidents."

"Until today when you flew?" she asked, her eyes searching his face.

"Yeah, I guess. That's never happened before, anyway." He inhaled

heavily. "I had *absolutely* no idea that was going to happen, Laura. And even when it was I think I was still trying to pretend it was someone, or something, else causing it."

She passed him a mug of coffee, made the way he liked it, and found some triple chocolate biscuits - not for herself, but because she knew Conor liked them. He loved junk food, and could eat almost anything without putting on weight.

Just like Clark Kent in our TV show, she thought, shaking her head at the idea.

But earlier she had compared his abilities to Superman's...

"Conor, what do you think about what you can do?" she asked him suddenly.

He regarded her thoughtfully over the rim of his mug. "I just don't know, Laura - I have no idea where these abilities come from, or why I have them. It's just... weird."

"Conor." Her voice was serious. "This may sound a bit far-fetched. Just listen, okay?" He nodded, his brown eyes intent on her. "Conor, you play Superman on TV, okay?" He nodded again, wondering where she was leading with this.

"Superman flies. Superman lifts heavy weights. Superman can move at Super-speed. Superman has super-hearing. Yeah?" Conor nodded again. She moved in for the kill. "Is there anything Superman can do which you can't?" she fired at him.

Conor's head jerked up, and he almost spilled his coffee. He could do everything the TV character Superman did? It was looking like it...

He thought. "He can burn things with his eyes."

"Try it, Conor," Laura instructed.

For a moment he felt like laughing out loud, but he saw the serious expression on her face and instead focused his eyes on a newspaper which lay on the worktop. A few seconds later, it began to smoulder and a curl of smoke drifted upwards. Laura caught her breath audibly.

Conor stared, disbelieving; he felt as if his entire body was shaking and he had to force his legs to hold him up. Then, as Laura watched him, his expression altered, became determined, and he held his coffee-mug out in front of him. He blew on it, then held it out to Laura. She took it, and nearly dropped it. "It's freezing!"

"Super-breath," Conor said, in little more than a whisper. "My God. I'm Superman!"

Laura placed the mug on the worktop and crossed to him, wrapping her arms around him as she sensed his need for comfort and understanding. "Conor, we don't know who or what you are - we just know that for some reason you seem to have the same powers as Superman."

Conor was silent for several minutes, his hands stroking slowly up and down Laura's back, as he held her tightly against him. His brain was ticking over furiously as he tried to work out the significance of this monumental discovery - and just why he, Conor Kane, had these strange powers which otherwise existed only in fiction. While he was certainly confused and shaken by the morning's events, at the same time he felt relief: finally, he knew that he really was different. It wasn't just his imagination; there was an explanation. And he finally had someone he could talk to about himself.

At length, he put her gently away from him and said, "Let's think this through." He paused. "Superman is a fictional character, right?"

"Right."

"Where did he come from?"

Laura answered. "In our TV show, and the book it's based on, he came from the planet Krypton. He was found by Jonathan and Martha Kent and raised by them in Smallville, Kansas."

"Okay," Conor answered. "Does Smallville actually exist?"

Laura was taken aback. Where was Conor going with this?

He suddenly looked decisive. "Your study, Laura - okay?"

She followed him in; he swiftly booted up her computer and connected to the Internet. Within minutes he had found the Kansas state home page, and had entered 'Smallville'. There was a match.

"My God," she said slowly. "And I suppose the Kents exist too?"

"I'm just going to check the register of electors," Clark replied. He did, but no Kents came up. He frowned. This appeared to blow his theory.

Laura had a thought, and reached out to touch his arm. "You're twenty-eight, Conor - what if there were Kents there thirty years ago?"

"You could be on to something," he replied slowly. Thinking for a moment first, he found an official site containing old Smallville records, and entered 'Jonathan Kent'. A match appeared: a Jonathan Kent had died twenty-two years earlier. 'Martha Kent' also came up positive; a death registered in 1979, at the age of seventy-four.

"The Kents really existed!" Laura breathed, barely believing what she was seeing. "And those dates make sense - in the book, Superman landed on earth as a baby in 1940. We just brought that forward by about thirty years for the TV show."

"But there was no Clark Kent," Conor added slowly, having just tried that name.

"Clark didn't stay in Kansas - he went to Metropolis," Laura reminded him.

Conor pulled an ironic smile. "Metropolis? There's no Metropolis in America."

Laura thought. "We always blur the location in the show, but it's kind of like New York."

Conor raised an eyebrow. "Search New York databases for a Clark Kent?"

"And the Lanes - why not?"

"What's all this going to prove?" Conor asked as he pulled up the relevant websites.

Laura shrugged. "Maybe that what we thought was fiction isn't make-believe after all."

Conor tried a number of names and dates in his search, finally establishing that a Lane family had lived in Manhattan in the 1940s. They had had one daughter, Lucy. "No Lois?" Laura exclaimed. "Conor, just about everyone in this story exists - *except* Lois and Clark!"

"But what does that mean?" Conor asked, baffled. "Okay, the dates seem to fit the book, like you said, but how does that explain *me* having these weird powers? And if there were Kents, and Lanes, what happened to Clark Kent and Lois Lane?"

"When were you born, Conor?" Laura asked, her frown indicating to Conor that she was thinking furiously.

"1970. I'll be twenty-nine later this year," he replied absently, still trying to figure out this bizarre discovery. Struck by a thought, he logged on to the New York official registry of births, marriages and deaths.

"What are you looking for?" Laura asked, puzzled. Conor continued typing, then sat back with an odd expression on his face.

He gestured towards the screen. "Lois Lane existed. See."

Laura looked. A baby girl called Lois had been registered to parents Sam and Ellen Lane in 1941, but a later entry showed that she had died as an infant in 1943. The cause of death was recorded as 'road traffic accident.' Laura caught her breath. Her character had really existed, but had been killed when she was little more than a baby.

"Conor!" she exclaimed huskily. "What if Clark really existed too? He was a year older than Lois, so he would have been born - or found - in 1940."

"Just like I'm a year older than you," Conor remarked, throwing her a quirky smile. There were just too many coincidences here for his liking. He returned to the Kansas state records and checked for a Clark Kent, around about 1940. He drew a blank. "No Clark," he observed, although she had already seen that for herself.

"Yeah... but what if *you* are Clark?" she replied softly. "What if

he didn't come to earth in 1940, like he should have done - he came thirty years later instead?"

"This is like something out of a science-fiction movie." Conor dismissed the idea, unable to take in the possibility that he might be some version of the fictional reporter. And yet... why would that be so impossible? Only half an hour earlier he had come to terms with the notion that he was Superman - or someone very like the super-hero.

"Conor, you aren't adopted, are you?" Laura asked him.

He shook his head slowly, but without too much conviction. "My folks never said I was, though... I guess, now you mention it, there was never much of a family resemblance. I mean, look at me! My hair's black, my skin is a sort of olive colour - the rest of my family has fair hair and pale skin!" He paused, thinking quickly. "No-one ever mentioned adoption, and when I cleared out the house after they died I didn't come across anything..." He trailed off, suddenly looking intent. "There's a box I always intended to go through - family papers and stuff. It's still over at my place."

"Then let's get over there!" Laura demanded.

They drove, in Conor's BMW; Laura had joked that he should behave like his TV counterpart, sweeping her up in his arms and flying them both over to Santa Monica. But Conor didn't laugh; he was still finding this incredibly difficult to take in, and he was also a bit nervous about flying again, especially out in the open. He also didn't want anyone else to see him doing anything... Super. He assured Laura, in response to her teasing requests, that if she *wanted* him to take her flying, he would do so, but much later that night, preferably off the coast where they wouldn't be seen. He mused that, as much as she was trying to tell him that he was very similar to his TV character Clark Kent, Laura herself was exhibiting a striking resemblance in personality to Lois Lane.

He dug out the box and they began to go through the piles of old papers and documents. It was a difficult task, since there was no order to the records and in amongst genuine family documents were old receipts, newspaper clippings and so on. Suddenly Conor's patience gave out; he nudged Laura aside and shook the papers out onto the floor, then completely stunned her by sifting through them at super-speed. Two minutes later he sat back, a strange expression on his face.

"Laura - here's my birth certificate, which looks pretty normal, but just look at this!" He handed her a yellowed sheet of parchment. She took it; it appeared to be a letter, written in now-faded ink in copper-plate handwriting.

Dear Mr and Mrs Kane, This baby is in need of a home. I trust that you will take good care of him and bring him up as your own son. His name is Conor.

"Can you read the signature?" Laura asked shakily.

Conor peered at it, but even using his super-vision he couldn't

distinguish the squiggle. "It looks like... Well, Wells... I don't know."

"Well, that settles that one," Laura told him. "You're not your parents' natural child."

"Yeah," Conor agreed slowly. "Though I guess I kind of worked that out long ago and just never admitted it to myself. I mean, with all the things I can do... I just wish I knew where I *do* come from!"

Laura gazed meaningfully at him. "Look, Conor, I know not a lot of this makes any sense. But the only solution that *does* fit is that you're really Clark Kent - or Kal-El, that's his real name, isn't it? Somehow you arrived here about thirty years too late, and you landed in California rather than Kansas. But you have to be from Krypton."

Conor paced the room, unwilling to accept Laura's explanation even though, as she'd said, it really was the only remotely plausible answer. Part of him knew why he was so reluctant... He turned to face her.

"Laura, if I should have been Clark Kent, then I should have been born nearly fifty-nine years ago. I should have been working with Lois Lane - I should have been in *love* with Lois Lane, but she died." He broke off, breathing heavily, then continued. "Laura, I won't - I *can't* believe that I shouldn't have been here, now, in this time, with you."

She stared at him, her breath caught in her throat.

He strode over to her, catching her by her shoulders. "Laura, I *love* you. I only realised that this morning, but it's true. And if I accept that I'm thirty years out of time, then I have to accept that you and I shouldn't be together."

They held each other's gaze for a long moment, before simultaneously leaning in for a kiss. When they came back to a realisation of their surroundings several minutes later, Laura gasped. Conor looked down; they were floating a couple of feet off the floor. He concentrated, and lowered them gently until his feet touched firm ground again. "Sorry," he apologised. "I just don't know why that's happening all the time now."

She laughed, recovered from the initial shock. "I don't mind, as long as you promise not to drop me, Conor." He hugged her, then she continued, "I don't know why you came here when you did, but I'm very glad that you did. I'm sorry Lois never grew up and got to meet her Clark, but I'm not sorry that I got you instead." She caressed his face tenderly, then leaned in for another kiss. "I love you too, Conor Kane. I think I realised I loved you when we were apart last summer and I missed you so much. I guess I've been working up towards asking you out for weeks now."

He grinned, suddenly deliriously happy despite all the mystery about his origins. "You can ask me out any time, Laura Lindsay. Just as long as you plan on keeping me."

Their laughter was interrupted by the doorbell.

"Darn!" Conor exclaimed. "Who on earth's that? - I don't want any visitors now!"

Laura gestured towards his eyes. "You can see, surely?"

Conor went into the hall and focused on the door; he then turned to Laura and said, "This is weird. There's this little guy out there, looks like an escapee from a period movie. You know, Sherlock Holmes era?"

Laura drew a sharp breath. "Conor, let him in!" He stared at her in disbelief. She waved her hand towards the door. "It's just a hunch. Go on!"

Reluctantly, he opened the door. The man on the doorstep studied him through an odd little quizzing-glass before speaking in an accent Conor recognised as formal, clipped English. "Mr Kane, I presume? And Miss Lindsay. Might I come in?"

Not having the faintest idea what was going on, Conor stepped back from the door. "I guess so - but who are you?"

The man stepped over the doorstep, carrying a carpet bag with him. "Ah, I'm so sorry," the stranger replied. "I'm H.G. Wells."

"The writer?" Conor sounded incredulous. "But he's dead - decades ago!"

"Yes, I'm afraid I'm rather getting used to being informed of that," the little Englishman answered dryly. "But I think I can prove that what I'm saying is the truth, Mr Kane... or should I say, Kal-El?"

Conor unconsciously adopted a posture which Laura recognised from their screen work: he drew himself up to his full height and, standing with legs slightly apart, crossed his arms over his chest. "Mr Wells, if that *is* your name, anyone who's seen me on TV knows that I play Clark Kent, also known as Kal-El."

"Ah yes, Mr Kane, but not many people know that it is also your own birth name. Not even yourself, until today," the stranger stated assuredly.

The man's words hit Conor like a blow to the solar plexus. Who was this man - and how did he know about their discoveries? He hesitated, then led the way into his sitting-room. "Okay, Mr Wells, let's have it - who are you really, and what are you doing here?"

Laura interrupted before the little man could answer. "Let me guess - you left that note, and Conor, with Conor's parents?"

Conor stared at Laura - what had given her that idea? But the signature on the letter - he had himself suggested that it might be Wells.

"Conor, listen." Laura spoke urgently to him. "While you were getting dressed in the Suit this morning, I got a chance to look at a script for an episode that's going to happen about six shows on from where we're filming now. It has H.G. Wells coming to see Superman and take

him and Lois back to when Clark was born, to stop some evil time-traveller killing Superman as a baby."

Again, Conor could think of nothing to say; he gaze flicked between Laura and their visitor. What was going on?

But Wells spoke. "Miss Lindsay, how very astute of you. And yes, indeed, I did do that - in the other universe."

"Other universe?" Conor found his voice at last. "What do you think we are, gullible or something?"

"I know exactly what - and who - you are, Mr Kane," Wells replied. "And Miss Lindsay as well, of course." He sighed. "Mr Kane, I really think you should allow me to explain."

Laura gestured to Conor; he took the hint and indicated that the man should continue. He prepared to listen, although his attitude was highly sceptical.

"Well, Mr Kane, you and your friend here have already done an excellent job of working out most of your story. You are quite right: you **are** Kal-El, son of Jor-El and Lara, from the planet Krypton. And you did in fact arrive in Smallville, Kansas, in 1940."

At that bald statement Conor prepared to interrupt; this whole story was entirely ridiculous. But Laura, sitting next to him on the couch, reached for his hand and squeezed it; he glanced at her and saw that she appeared to be happy to listen to Wells.

"Well, Mr Kane, what happened then was rather similar to what happened in that other universe I mentioned: a certain rogue time-traveller from the future, whose name is Tempus, by the by, travelled to this dimension with the intention of killing you before the Kents were able to find you. I guessed his dastardly plan and arrived there just before he did, but he then threatened to find you at some point during your childhood: after all, everyone in the future knew just where and when Clark Kent grew up. So I conceived of this plan, and I smuggled you into my time machine. I decided to bring you into the future by thirty years, and I chose California instead of Smallville. The family I chose almost at random, except for the fact that the Kanes were a childless couple, just like the Kents. I hoped that by altering the course of history to this extent I would ensure that Tempus would never be able to find you."

Letting go of Laura's hand, Conor got to his feet and paced the room again. This story sounded so incredible... absolutely the stuff of fantasy. And yet that morning, if someone had told him that he would be able to fly he wouldn't have believed that either. He whirled around to face Wells. "Time travel? Alternate dimensions? This all sounds pretty far-fetched!"

"And your being from another planet isn't, Kal-El?" Wells asked him. "Yet you had worked all of that out for yourself before I got here."

Laura intervened then as a thought occurred to her. "I read that script, Mr Wells - surely you aren't allowed to interfere with the time-line?"

He smiled quickly at her. "Oh, you are just as intelligent as I had always pictured you, Miss Lindsay! Yes, that is perfectly true - in that dimension. In this dimension, the course of history has been altered on a number of occasions. My little changes, to ensure that Kal-El grew up in the 1970s rather than the 1940s, are not so significant compared to some of the changes other time-travellers have wrought."

"So... you say you brought me to the Kanes in 1970 to protect me from this - Tempus," Conor said slowly. "But if that's true, why didn't you leave any clues as to who I was, where I was from... that I had... Super-powers?"

"Because, Mr Kane, your very ignorance of your origins was your most effective protection," Wells replied. "You grew up as an ordinary boy, then an ordinary man. You suppressed your super-abilities because you didn't know what else to do about them. You might never have known for sure, but for that accident on set this morning."

"How do you know about that?" Conor demanded.

"Mr Kane, I am a time traveller. I know everything which has happened to you. I have been monitoring you for your entire life. You simply have never noticed me before."

Laura was thinking quickly. "Mr Wells, how is it that we have a TV series which features a character with Conor's abilities? And people who really lived? And how is it that a plot in that show really happened in some other dimension?"

Wells smiled. "Miss Lindsay, really very few of these things are complete coincidences. In the dimension I come from, there really is a Clark Kent and a Lois Lane. They really do work at the Daily Planet with Perry White and Jimmy Olsen. And Superman really does fly around Metropolis fighting crime, and no-one knows he is Clark Kent."

Laura gasped. "Does Lois know?"

Wells smiled enigmatically. "Miss Lindsay, you have seen the script for the episode in which I appear. Does that answer your question?"

"But... you send her back before you arrive, so she forgets!"

Again, Wells smiled. "Miss Lindsay, Mr Kane, the reason the existence of Superman is so important to this and every other dimension is that Superman is the forebear of Utopia in the future. Utopia is that perfect world in which there is no crime, no evil, no poverty, and it was founded by Superman's descendants. That is why it was so important to me to protect young Kal-El... er, Mr Kane."

"And Superman marries...?" Laura prompted.

Conor threw her a crooked, mirthless smile. "Lois Lane, of course, Laura - that much is obvious from what we know so far!" He turned back to Wells. "There isn't a Lois Lane in this world, however, so

that kind of messes that one up, doesn't it?"

Another enigmatic smile. "All will be explained in due course, Mr Kane." He turned back to Laura. "To answer your question, Miss Lindsay, the television show is all my doing. I needed to make sure that Mr Kane had some means of finding out about his heritage, since the other ways - the way the Clark Kent of the other dimensions found out - had all been destroyed by Tempus. Therefore I ensured that one of the Superman history books from my dimension was published over here, as a work of fiction, although I ensured that it was altered to reflect the dates and time in which Superman should have been discovered by his adoptive family - not only because that is the way it should have been for this dimension, but also because I did not want to leave any clues for Tempus." He paused, studying Conor briefly through his quizzing-glass. "I brought this book to the attention of Marner Sisters, your television network, and they were persuaded to commission a television show, based on some draft storylines which I ensured were available. You had become an actor, Mr Kane - do you remember why?"

Surprised, Conor answered, "When I was at school, I was in a play... this little guy came up to me afterwards and told me I should try acting professionally. My parents hated the idea, but I did it anyway." He broke off, staring oddly at Wells; a faint memory nagged him... "It was you!"

"Quite right, Mr Kane," Wells replied. "As I said, I needed to ensure that you found out all that you needed to know about yourself, and the best means appeared to be for you to play yourself."

"So... I'm really Superman, just born thirty years too late, and brought up by the Kanes instead of the Kents?" Conor asked slowly, finally accepting that Wells was telling the truth no matter how outrageous it sounded.

"Yes, you are indeed," Wells answered.

Conor snorted. "I *hate* that suit!"

Wells laughed aloud. "I think I may be able to help you there, Mr Kane." He reached for his bag and opened it. "This is a present from Mr Kent - or rather, Superman. This is one of the suits he wears these days. I told him and Miss Lane about you, and they wanted to help in some small way."

Curious, Conor took the strange outfit from Wells. The colour and style were the same as the suit he wore on set, but in every other respect this suit was entirely different. The fabric was light but incredibly strong, and it shimmered as he touched it. As he ran his hand over the front, he felt an almost magnetic attraction, and he shot a glance at Wells.

"Ah - I believe the suit is picking up the aura, Mr Kane," Wells explained. "It is part of you: everything within a very close distance of your body will be protected by the force of your aura. This suit is made from a special substance which is designed to make best use of that aura."

"But... what am I supposed to do?" Conor demanded, almost pleading. "I'm an actor - not a super-hero!"

Wells shook his head with a smile. "I think you know what you are, Mr Kane. And I'm sure I can safely leave you and Miss Lindsay now to find out for yourselves."

Conor examined the suit again, then on impulse left the room carrying it. In the hall, he stripped at super-speed and dressed again in the suit; as Mr Wells had promised, it felt entirely different to anything he had worn on set. He strode back into the room, the cape swishing behind him. Laura's gasp was enough to tell him how different he actually looked in it.

She came towards him, examining him from all angles. "Conor... you *should* look just like you do on set, but this is just so different! You look... fantastic!"

He reached for her, grasping her lightly by the shoulders and bending to kiss her. She responded by wrapping her arms around his neck and clinging to him, her lips opening under his and inviting his possession.

A slight cough made them break apart. "Mr Kane, Miss Lindsay, I really think I must be going now."

Conor stopped Wells' progress simply by blocking his path to the door. "You didn't answer my question about my 'life partner' - Lois Lane. The Lois in this universe died as a baby, fifty-six years ago."

"Yes, that is of course true," Wells agreed. "But I'm surprised the two of you haven't deduced the answer to this by now." At the sight of two baffled expressions, he continued.

"Yes, Miss Lane died in infancy; I'm afraid that was also Tempus's doing. In fact, he engineered Miss Lane's death even before going back to try to kill Superman."

"But why?" Laura interjected.

"It's really quite simple, Miss Lindsay. You see, Superman would not be what he is without Lois Lane. She is his inspiration, his constant support and source of advice. They are soul-mates. Without Lois Lane, it is very possible that Superman would never set in train the events leading to Utopia."

Laura grinned at Conor; this was a familiar topic of discussion. "I always told you Lois was essential to Superman!" Conor merely raised his eyebrow; he was wondering where this was leading, since there was no Lois in this world. And in any case...

"Mr Wells, I don't know whether you're planning to produce a Lois Lane out of that bag of yours, but I want you to know that I love Laura." He drew Laura close to him again, holding her possessively. "*Laura* is the only woman I want."

But Wells smiled. "Excellent, Mr Kane - Superman. This is precisely as it should be."

His audience, however, was still confused. Wells sighed. "Miss Lindsay, who were your parents?"

She frowned. "My parents...? Why?" However, Wells simply indicated that she should answer the question. She shrugged. "My dad was Peter Lindsay, and my mom Karen Lane."

Conor stared at her. Lane? It couldn't possibly be a coincidence... could it? Not on top of all these other coincidences which had turned out not to be, he thought in wonder.

Wells' expression altered into a broad beam. "Mr Kane, I see that you are beginning to realise. Yes, Miss Lindsay is the daughter of Lois Lane's cousin. Karen's father and Sam Lane were brothers."

Laura interrupted to ask, "But how come I never knew that?"

Wells shrugged lightly. "The brothers lost touch during the War, after their parents died - your grandfather fought in the Navy, and Dr Lane was in the Army Medical Corps. They ended up on different coasts of the USA in the end."

"So... Laura is related to the real Lois Lane," Conor stated, wondering if this somehow meant that Wells would let him stay with her after all. Just let the man try to separate them!

Again, Wells smiled. "You see, I really had to try very hard to outsmart Tempus this time. I have another little machine, called a soul tracer. When little Lois died in 1943, I thought that this time I might have failed; then Tempus tried to destroy Superman and I conceived my plan to ensure that he - you - were brought up in a later time. It was then relatively simple to engineer the birth of a little girl to the California relations of the New York Lanes, and to ensure that Lois Lane's soul lived on in that baby girl. You, Miss Lindsay."

Conor had to hold Laura up. She shook her head and tried, incoherently, to speak several times. Eventually, she gasped, "I'm... really... Lois Lane?"

Wells smiled sympathetically. "I can understand that this is difficult for you to come to terms with, Miss Lindsay - for both of you. It must have been quite a shock to discover that you actually *are* the characters you have been playing on television for over a year. But let me assure you that you are."

He inclined his head gracefully. "And now, if you don't mind, I really must take my leave."

This time Conor allowed him to go, and after showing Wells out he returned to Laura. His own stunned reaction was mirrored in her dazed expression. He embraced her, taking comfort from her closeness.

"What do we do now?" she asked him after a few minutes.

Conor paused, staring into the far distance. What did he want to do? In a matter of hours, his life had changed completely. Was Wells suggesting that he, Conor, should actually take to flying around in this modified ski-suit, fighting truth and justice? That wasn't what he wanted to do at all... was it? He was an actor, not a mild-mannered reporter-cum-superhero, after all!

Suddenly, his attention was distracted by an emergency broadcast on... he realised he was hearing his neighbour's TV, and his neighbour's house was almost a block away. He frowned, then without any further hesitation bent and kissed Laura swiftly. "Can we talk about this in a few minutes? I think I'm needed..."

In a flurry of wind, he was gone; Laura collapsed on the couch in disbelief.

Half an hour later, Conor returned to the house, taking care to land in the most sheltered part of the garden; he had realised as he had dressed himself in the suit earlier just how Clark Kent from the other world managed to keep his street clothes handy. Conor grinned to himself, and engineered a quick spin-change before walking quickly back to join Laura.

She shook her head at him. "I don't need to ask what you've been up to! I turned on the local news programme on the radio, and they were covering a chemical spillage on the freeway. They said someone in a crazy red and blue suit *flew* in and melted all the chemicals before picking up the truck. The announcer said it was like Superman from the TV series come to life."

Conor shrugged. "Well, that's exactly what it is, isn't it, Laura?"

She smiled at him, at once awed and admiring. "How did they react when you appeared?"

He laughed aloud. "It was... amazing! I think some bystanders thought it was Hollywood - filming for 'Lois and Clark' - but then I got rid of the chemicals right in front of them, and when I lifted that truck it was obvious there were no wires or cranes. And I just couldn't resist showing off a little when I flew off again."

"You enjoyed it, didn't you?" Laura asked curiously.

Conor's expression was, briefly, surprised. "Yeah. It was kind of weird - I just didn't even think twice about going to help, and when I did... well, I guess maybe there is something in this idea that Superman is what I was always destined to be." His brow furrowed suddenly. "The thing is... what I need to know is... are you prepared to live with a part-time super-hero?"

She stared at him, eyes wide. "Are you asking me to move in with you?"

"Uh... I guess so... but I need to know how you feel about... Kal-El, Superman?"

Laura shrugged. "He's pretty okay, I guess. As long as I can have Conor Kane most of the time too."

Conor laughed. "I think that can be arranged!"

"But what do we do about XYZ and 'Lois and Clark'?" Laura asked. "Now that all this has happened, it would seem a little weird to carry on

doing that."

Moving quickly to draw Laura into his arms again, Conor shrugged. "I have a feeling that, with the real Superman around, Marner's and XYZ might want to drop the TV show. Why watch actors when you've got the real thing? Doesn't bother me if they do cancel - I'd prefer to write anyway, and I'm pretty sure I can sell my scripts if I do. And you... you've got plenty of parts on offer."

"You reckon Wells was serious - about that Utopia stuff, I mean?" Laura asked.

"Dunno. But I'm certainly keen to start the ball rolling - on the descendants business, I mean," Conor assured her with a wicked grin.

She punched him, then grunted in pain. "When that book called Superman the Man of Steel, the writer wasn't joking," she groaned. Conor simply smiled. He was getting used to the idea now; flying over half of Beverley Hills to sort out that spillage had certainly given him a taste for what lay ahead. He would be the Superman of this world; what did it matter whether his name was Conor Kane or Clark Kent, he was still the baby who had come to Earth as Kal-El. And Laura was truly his Lois Lane, according to Wells. Together, they would start their own dynasty of super-powered beings, motivated by a desire to combat evil and avert disaster.

And he would never have to hang from that harness again!

Seated in his time machine, concealed in Conor's garage, Wells smiled in satisfaction. His plan had worked; Tempus had been foiled again. Superman and his life partner had found each other, and Utopia would be created in another dimension.

- The End -

Postscript

Although this story has quite a different ending, I do want to acknowledge the work of Jenerator, and of Margaret Brignell and Debby Stark. This story does begin with a similar theme to their stories, 'The Chicken and the Egg' and the 'Swap-Meet' duo, and at least some inspiration comes from these works. Jenerator, I did try to differentiate my 'accident-on-set' scene from yours!

End
file.